Tourism, Culture and Recreation
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Newfoundlander Named Female Athlete of the Year for Canada

Janet Maher of Mount Pearl, a multi-sport Special Olympics athlete, was recently selected from a group of nominees across the country and named the 2008 female athlete of the year by Special Olympics Canada.

The Honourable Clyde Jackman, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, extended congratulations to Ms. Maher on her achievement.

"Janet's national recognition is an outstanding accomplishment and is a testament to her talent, dedication and sportsmanship," said Minister Jackman. "She is an inspiration for Newfoundland and Labrador athletes and as a province we are all proud of her success."

Ms. Maher has been active in Special Olympics for over 10 years participating in the sports of floor hockey, bowling, athletics and soccer. She has competed at a number of national games, but was most recently a key member of the national gold medal floor hockey team in Quebec City.

Johnny Byrne, Executive Director of Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador (SONL), said the organization is thrilled with the selection of Ms. Maher for the award.

"The recognition of Janet's accomplishments on the national level brings about great pride for our organization's athletes, volunteers and staff," said Mr. Byrne. "The significance of this accomplishment is magnified by the road that Janet travelled and the barriers she has crossed to get to this point. Janet is an inspiration and role model for us all and we are thrilled to see her recognized as Canada's greatest female athlete for 2008."

As the recipient of this prestigious award, Ms. Maher has been invited to Toronto. On Tuesday, December 2, Special Olympics Canada will host its annual awards evening, at which time, her efforts will be acknowledged and award presentations will be made, and on Wednesday, December 3, she has been invited to attend the Special Olympics Festival.

Deborah Bright, CEO of Special Olympics Canada, said members of the organization look forward to celebrating Ms. Maher's successes and accomplishments when she is honoured at the National Awards Evening in December.

"The national athlete of the year award is the highest honour that can be bestowed upon an athlete in Canada," said Ms. Bright. "Janet exemplifies the spirit and qualities of a great athlete through her perseverance, competitive achievements and her eternally positive attitude."

SONL is dedicated to enriching the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with an intellectual disability through sport. It is a provincial not-for-profit grassroots organization that provides sport training and competition opportunities for over 450 athletes of all ages and abilities. There are currently 12 community-based clubs that offer sport programs. Through sport, Special Olympics offers athletes and families a sense of achievement and an opportunity to excel as they take on leadership roles within their community.

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